

DICKS' STANDARD PLAYS.

A VISION OF VENUS.

BY HARRY PLEON.



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A VISION OF VENUS;

OR, A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S NIGHTMARE.

A FARCICAL PIECE OF SINGULARITY, IN TWO ACTS, AND
EIGHT TABLEAUX.

PARTLY SUGGESTED BY ANSTEY'S "TINTED VENUS."
BY HARRY PLEON.

Produced at the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, March 20, 1893.



Dramatis Personæ,

[See p. 9.]

ALPHONZO LATHEREM	{ (A Hairdresser and Perfumer, who by some mystic } power is beloved and followed by Aphrodite)	Mr. Harry Pleon.
INSPECTOR HANDSAW	(Of the Criminal Investigation Department)	Mr. Edward Leigh.
AUGUSTUS GILLFEATHER	... (A jolly fellow, don't you know)	Mr. Bruce Lindley.
FIRST ROBBER	...	Mr. F. Beaumont.
SECOND ROBBER	...	Mr. Barrett.
OLD MAN	...	Mr. W. Abbott.
JANE FRILLINGS	... (A Dressmaker)	Miss Ada Morgan.
VENUS	... (The Living Statue)	Miss Amy Lyster.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—One Hour and a Quarter.

1,025. Dicks' Standard Plays.

COSTUME.

ALPHONZO.—Fashionable light suit; white hat.

AUGUSTUS.—Black frock suit; tall silk hat; very high collar.

HANDSAW.—Inspector's clothes.

TWO ROBBERS.—Rough clothes.

OLD MAN.—Black coat; light trousers; white hat; stock; stick &c.

JANE.—Very neat walking dress.

VENUS.—Something after the mythological style.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.—Hendon Gardens.

ACT II.—The Hairdresser's.

TABLEAU I.—On the Drunk—Awake.—TABLEAU II.—On the Ground—Asleep.—TABLEAU III.—The Dream; the Living Statue.—TABLEAU IV.—Attempted Robbery of the Antique Venus.—TABLEAU V.—Venus Claims the Hairdresser.—TABLEAU VI.—Venus at the Barber's.—TABLEAU VII.—It Vanishes.—TABLEAU VIII.—Wide Awake.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*; L. U. E. *Left Upper Entrance*; R. U. E. *Right Upper Entrance*; L. S. E. *Left Second Entrance*; P. S. *Prompt Side*; O. P. *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

. The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

A VISION OF VENUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Hendon Gardens.—House piece, L. 3 E. to L. 2 E., with “Refreshments” worded over folding doors—the doors are made so as to show the counter, &c., inside; semi-grottos (two), R. 2 E. to R. 3 E.; two statues, R. C. and L. C. (up stage); the Living Statue in C., covered with long black cloth till wanted. Scene at back represents gardens, after the style of the Welsh Harp, Hendon.—Lights half down at commencement of the scene, which gradually gets darker and darker towards the end of scene.—Music as curtain goes up. “Is this a dream?”; and then waltz—piano.

ALPHONZO and AUGUSTUS are discovered dancing with two Girls (“sups.”). Others are waltzing as curtain rises. After a while Alphonzo and Augustus are left by themselves. Waltz still being played piano through dialogue.

Alph. Awfully jolly dance that, eh, old fellow? Those waltzas and polkas are just my style.

Aug. Pardon me, old chappie, you mean waltz, don't you know?

Alph. Well, waltz the difference? I wonder where those two girls went? I don't want 'em hanging round me, as I am expecting my young woman down here in a few minutes.

Aug. Indeed?

Alph. No, in a cab! You see, I've been on with Jane—that's her name—some time, and she's a nice girl, only she is mighty partickler. She doesn't like me loving and courting other girls,

Aug. Very likely.

Alph. Well, she'll be down here presently, so I must keep myself very quiet, you know.

Aug. Ah, well, in the meanwhile we will have a little refreshment! Come along, old chappie! Awfully jolly place this, don't you know!

[Exit into refreshment-bar.

Alph. (Aside.) I wish I had some money. I've only got my fare home and a pipe-cleaner. I suppose I must face it out. (Aloud.) By the way, what say you if we have a drink, eh?

Aug. Ah, a good idea! Awfully jolly, old fellow!

Alph. (Aside.) Yes, it will be if I have to pay. (Aloud.) What shall it be?

Aug. Champagne.

Alph. Of course—of course! (Aside.) My fare home looks sick. All right!

Aug. Let's toss for it—heads I win tails you lose!

Alph. All right. Kaffers win, tails Zulus. (Aside.) I've only got a trouser button to toss with. Never mind, here goes.

Aug. Now, then. (They toss up. Alphonzo pretends to lose his coin; begins looking for it.) Have you lost something, old boy?

Alph. (Still looking.) Yes; but it's of no consequence—only a ten-pound note. Never mind, old boy, it will do for the parkkeeper.

Aug. Do you always toss with notes?

Alph. Yes; I attach more importance to notes than money in coin.

Aug. Why so?

Alph. Why, you see if you put a five-pound note in your waistcoat pocket, you double it; and when you bring it out again you see it increases.

Aug. Ah, awfully jolly! I'll remember that!

Alph. (Aside.) So will I. I read it in Tit-Bits.

Aug. But, joking on one side, I must pay for the drinks.

Alph. No, no, old fellow; I really—

(Putting his hand in his pocket.)

Aug. Now, once and for all you are not going to pay—

Alph. (Aside.) No, I'm not. (Aloud.) But I insist!

Aug. Once for all you can't pay.

Alph. (Aside.) No, I'm — if I can. (Aloud.) Well, if you insist upon it, I suppose I must give in.

Aug. Now, there's a sensible fellow. You can pay next time, see?

Alph. Oh, yes!

Aug. A little supper, eh, at the Café Royal?

Alph. (Aside.) Yes, two of eels and a ha'poth of bread. (Aloud.) Certainly, old boy.

Aug. We'll make a little party—two nice girls, eh? What do you think of a little fricassée de poulet et pommes de terres frites?

Alph. No, I don't think so; but I never go in for politics.

Aug. You funny fellow, you will have your little joke! But I'll go and order these drinks. What shall it be—Moët?

Alph. Yes, the more the merrier.

Aug. (Going towards pavilion, calling.) Waiter—waiter!

[Exit into refreshment-room.

Alph. My word, what a dude he is! It's a wonder he ain't subdu'd sometimes, don't you know. But it must be near my girl's time. (Looks at watch.) She ought to have been here now. I hope she don't meet that girl I have been dancing with. I must be above those things before her. What the eye don't see the ear can't see either. Hallo, I

do believe I see a female figure. No, it ain't her! I wish when she comes, I had the courage to propose to her. I've got the ring and everything ready. A nice ring—six carat. I must get a couple of pen'oth of whiskers—I mean whiskey—and some four ale down me to back me up like. That's a good idea. I'll just try a little drop now on account.

[Exit into refreshment-room.]

Enter HANDSAW, R. 1 E.

Hand. Well, up to the present I haven't seen any suspicious-looking characters round here! I've been sent down here because there's been some daring robberies of antique sculpture, and one among 'em is a genuine antique of Venus, worth thousands of pounds; and it's been hidden away in some public gardens and palmed on to the manager as merely plaster, and took a trifle for it, so that when the coast was clear they'd be able to come for it again, and take it abroad. A very clever idea! But I'll find out where this figure is. It is in some public gardens. (Looks at figures.) I don't suppose it's among those; but I'll wait a bit. Why, blow me, here's one covered up! (Looks under cloth of c. figure.) My eye, what a beauty! What if this should be the missing Venus. So soon! I'll hang about here anyhow.

[Strolls off, L. 1 E.]

Enter JANE, R. U. E.

Jane. I'm a little behind-hand to meet my Alphonzo. But better late than never. I said I would meet him by the refreshment-room. (Looks in.) Why, there he is! I'll just go in and surprise him.

[Exit into refreshment-room.]

Enter HANDSAW, R. 1 E.

Hand. At last! I felt certain I should capture my man or men to-night. I just saw two fellows climbing over the wall yonder—one had a sack. I am certain they're coming for this figure. I'll let 'em think the coast is quite clear, and then when they've got the figure in the sack—then I'll come on 'em like a ton of coal. I'll keep round about here. This is glorious.

[Goes off, R. 1 E.]

Enter ALPHONZO and JANE, from refreshment-room. Alphonzo drunk.

Jane. Well, I must say you're a nice young gentleman! After failing to meet me at the mentioned spot, you get beastly intoxicated. (Stamping her foot.) It is really shameful!

Alph. 'Squse me, Jane, I'm not intoxicated—I'm excited. (Aside.) I must propose to-night—I feel I must.

Jane. I think it's too bad of you, and I came here thinking I was going to enjoy a dance.

Alph. Ah, Jane, don't think of dancing—think of what I am about to say!

Jane. (Aside.) Oh, my, he's going to propose! (Aloud.) What is it?

Alph. (Suddenly.) Jane, I have something burning within me—

Jane. (Sighing.) Ah, me—ah, me!

Alph. No, not an army—not the Salvation Army; but it is an indescribable something that soars on high—a something that—that— Do not interrupt me.

Jane. I didn't interrupt you.

Alph. Well, why didn't you? Ah, Jane, did you but know—if you only knew—

Jane. What?

Alph. I don't know. Never mind, bring up all that is past and is to come. I have something to say to you—something to ask you, which means life or death to me.

Jane. (Aside.) He's going to ask me to marry him. (Aloud.) What is it?

Alph. Tell me—tell me—

Jane. Yes—yes.

Alph. Has your mother sold the mangle?

Jane. (Smacking his face.) You're a fool!

Alph. Jane, you have touched me on a tender spot.

Jane. Where?

Alph. An unseen place. You have called me a fool! I can stand being called a thief, swindler, liar, or even murderer, but when a person calls me a fool, they insult the mother I board with! Away, woman, don't attempt to cajole me!

Jane. (Crying.) I ain't—I don't want to cajole you!

Alph. Why don't you come and catch hold of me? Come and kiss me!

Jane. (Crying.) I sha'n't, you nasty, ugly, dirty, drunken beast.

Alph. When you speak loving words like those, I know you love me! Come and kiss your little snowdrop!

Jane. (Annoyed.) Kiss you? Not I. When I kiss anyone it will be a fine, tall, handsome gentleman, someone who hasn't lost all idea of chivalry!

Alph. (Taken back.) I didn't mean what you said. I mean I didn't say what I mean!

Jane. I won't speak to you again. I will find a gentleman to take me home. (Aside.) Ah, here comes a gentleman from the Pavilion! I will speak to him, and make little Alphonzo jealous. I'll serve him out for getting drunk.

Enter AUGUSTUS from refreshment-room.

Aug. Ah, here you are, Alphonzo, and this I presume is your young lady, don't you know?

(Bowling.—Business.)

Alph. Yes, you do presume, don't you know! (Aside.) This fellow will cut me out if I don't take care.

Aug. (To Jane.) May I take the liberty of asking you to take a little refreshment?

Jane. Certainly! (Takes his arm.)

Alph. Well, I shall get the needle in a minute. (To Augustus.) Look here, old man, I am—

Aug. Some other time, old chappie!

Alph. But I paid her fare down here!

Aug. Well, I'll take care of her till I see you are a little more sober, don't you know.

Alph. No; I don't know.

Aug. (To Jane.) There is going to be a little dancing in the pavilion.

Jane. Oh, that will be lovely!

Aug. And may I have the pleasure of your hand?

Alph. He'll have the pleasure of my foot!

Aug. As I was saying, may I have the pleasure of your hand in the dance?

Jane. With pleasure. (Waltz played piano.)

Aug. Ah, they've started! Let us join the revelry.

Alph. Go to the devilry! False girl, you have blighted my maiden heart! (Jane laughs.)

Aug. (Laughing.) Ah, that's truly funny, old chappie, don't you know! Come along, Ma'mselle!

[Exit Augustus and Jane into pavilion.]

Alph. Well, this is a pretty state of things! He walks off with my girl and calls her a dam sell. What shall I do? And to think I got this ring out of pawn to give her! I must regain her somehow! How shall I do it? I know. I'll ask her to marry me. I must practise it a bit. I have it. I'll practise with one of these figures. (Looks at them.) No; I don't like the look of them—they ain't got enough clothes on! Hallo, here's another! She's covered up. Let's see if she's dressed a little more decent.

He throws the covering by, discovering VENUS. Limelight. Stage fully dark.—Picture.—She is discovered sitting on a chair—(trick chair)—her arm extended. As limelight falls full on her, HANDSAW appears, R. 1 E. Music—piano till end of Act.

Hand. (Aside.) Hallo, another one! Then there's a gang of 'em here! I may have to get assistance.

[Withdraws.]

Alph. (Who up to now has been contemplating the figure.) My eye, ain't she a beauty! I'll practise with this one. Now, where's that ring? I wonder if it will fit her?

Puts ring on the figure's finger. As he is doing so, HANDSAW looks on, R. 1 E.

Hand. I wish I could see his face. I can't get a glimpse.

[Withdraws.]

Alph. Most lovely creature, here behold me at your very feet. (Falls.) Quite so. I love the very ground I walk on! Say you will marry me, and you shall never know a moment's happiness? (Business.—Scream inside pavilion.) What's that? Someone been run over? Never mind, as I said before— (Scream outside.)

AUGUSTUS rushes in from refreshment-room.

Aug. Oh, old fellow, your sweetheart has just had—

Alph. (Excitedly.) Kittens? No, it cannot be!

Aug. Don't be a fool! She's just had a fit. Come and assist her!

Alph. I'll be a husband to her; and I'll see if I can't a sister.

Aug. Come at once.

[Rushes off into pavilion.]

Alph. I must get that ring off first. (Business.—He tries to get ring off—can't.) I can't get it off—it's stuck! What am I to do? (Scream inside.) There's Jane broke another button off her boots!

Augustus. (Calling from inside) Latherum, are you coming?

Alph. I can't get it off! (Very excited.) It won't come off!

(Business—trying to get ring off.)

Augustus. (Inside.) Are you coming? Her head's on fire!

Alph. Fetch a fire-escape! Try a cabbage-leaf! What am I to do?

Augustus. (Inside.) She's gone into hysterics.

Alph. (To figure, in desperation.) There you are, do you hear that? She's gone into rheumatics. Will you give that ring up?

Venus. (Moving for the first time.) No!

Alph. (Terrified.) Great Scott, I could have sworn I heard it speak! Am I bewitched? Am I dreaming? My head reels—I feel like a balloon with the gas going out!

(Falls nearly under a seat.)

Venus. (Pointing to Alphonzo.) Dream on! That ring gives me life! Awakened out of my long, long trance, this ring has made thee mine! I feel the love within me now I did for Adonis. I will follow thee through the world. This ring has given me life, awakened me from my trance. Venus is not dead or ne'er can die! Love rules the world. I will rule—(to Alphonzo)—aye, rule thy future destiny! Dream on—dream on!

(Front cloth falls in.)

(Music, forte. — Close in "Clouds" flats.—Fi st grove.—This scene is only to give time for a double made up like Alphonzo, to take his place. The rest of this absurdity is supposed to be a nightmare. — Gong. — Scene Opens.)

SCENE III.—Same as Scene I.—Lights still down, no limelight. Alphonzo (double) laying on ground in exactly the same position.

ALPHONZO (real one) standing by the figure trying to get the ring off.

Alph. Curse the thing! I can't get it off nohow. (Scream.) I must go and do something for her, or I shall lose all my chances of ever calling her my wife. I'll cover this figure up first. (Throws cloth over figure.) Now, I'll go in and see what can be done!

[Exit into refreshment-room.]

Music.—Enter TWO ROBBERS, one with a sack. They enter very cautiously, L. U. E. HANDSAW just peeps on, R. 1 E.

Hand. Hallo, two more! These are the two I saw get over the fence! Now to watch their little game!

[Withdraws.]

First R. Now, Jim, just you place the sack over the statue's head, and then I'll get it across my shoulders.

During this last dialogue, enter ALPHONZO, from pavilion.

Alph. She's all right now! She was just waltzing round and she trod on her ear and fell over! Now, I'll get that ring. Hallo, what are those two fellows up to? If they discover that ring they may keep it!

First R. Now, I'll take the cover off!

Handsav. (Looking on, R. 1 E.) Now's my time!

First R. Off with it!

(They throw the covering from off Venus, and she has vanished. (Trick chair.) Chord.)

Alph., Supers., and Hand. (Speaking all at the same time.) It's gone!

Enter EVERYONE.—Crowd from pavilion.

All. What's the matter?

Enter VENUS, R. U. E. (Limelight.)

Venus. (To Alphonzo.) Gentle youth, you brought me to life by the touch of the ring. I am thine.

Alph. (In astonishment.) Eh?

(Everyone aghast.—Picture.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.—THE DREAM.

SCENE I.—Latherem's Hairdresser's Shop—Scene divided into two parts—L. half Latherem's shop, with doors, R. and L.; window at back, with curtain, shaving chairs, shampooing table, &c.; table, chairs, &c., Screen at back. Fireplace, L., kettle on hob. R. half supposed to be street; barber's pole outside shop door. Lights gradually up during scene.

As the scene opens, ALPHONZO rushes in from L. U. E.—outside shop.

Alph. At last I've got home! How did I get here? I have a confused idea of losing sight of Jane, losing sight of the ring—in fact, I've a confused idea I've lost my senses. I wonder if I've lost my key! No, here it is! (Opens door.) Where's a light? Ah, here it is! (On table.) I'm sure I don't know whether I'm standing on my feet or my feet. (Lights candles. Stage lighter.) Before I do anything further, I'll just lock the door, to keep early customers out! I must bring my scattered thoughts too! (Locks door.) I feel as though I want a little cheering up! I'll just light the fire. (During the next lines of his speech, he busies himself lighting the fire, bringing out his breakfast things from the cupboard, putting the kettle on to boil, &c.) I can't get over me being such a lunatic! as to put that ring on that statue's finger! And then again it seemed to speak to me! But how could it be? But, anyhow, I've lost that ring! Perhaps I could get another one made like it! I'll see! (By this time he has made the tea, and is sitting down by table getting his breakfast.) I wonder what time it is? It must be near six o'clock! I shall have to open just now. Ah, I feel a little better now! (Goes on eating.) Perhaps it was the drink! Somehow or other I fancied I saw that statue come off her pedestal. I can't make it out at all.

(Business of eating.—Slow music.—Limelight.)

VENUS appears at back, R. U. E.

Venus. Alphonzo, I am here! (Outside shop.)

Alph. Eh, I thought I heard my name! P'raps some early customer for a shave! I'll just see. (He unlocks door, and he looks out, sees Venus, jumps in again very frightened; slams door, and locks it.) Great Scott, can I believe my eyes? It's the statue alive?

Venus. 'Tis he! Alphonzo, I come!

Alph. (With his back against door.) Not if I know it! What should I do with a live dead statue. (As he is saying this Venus goes to back of shop, and reappears in shop by aid of the vampire. Alphonzo does not see her for a moment.) I wonder if it's gone? I'll just take a peep through the window. (He crosses over, not seeing Venus. He gets by fireplace, when he suddenly sees her. He is so startled he half falls into fireplace, in doing so he grabs hold of the end of table and his trousers catch fire (trick), sits on chair and it goes out. Business.) Hair cut or shampoo? I must say something to show I'm not frightened. It won't answer! Say something or I shall go off my dot!

Venus. You do not know me?

Alph. No, mum; you've the advantage of me. Have you got a card?

Venus. I am Venus! I have many names in the outer world! It is I who rule the God of Love, I sway the hearts of all true lovers; in your world I have caused you poor mortals to burn for me—aye, and with an unconsuming, unquenchable fire!

Alph. Lor', you're a bit of a hot 'un!

Venus. Hot 'un! You speak in enigmas? You are fully aware why I come hither?

Alph. I don't. You are the statue out of them gardens, ain't you?

Venus. I am no statue—I am Venus, I tell you! I have lain in a long, long trance, how long I know not, in my own palace in the Isle of Cyprus. How long I should have lain in that trance I know not had it not been for thou, most lovely mortal!

Alph. (Aside.) She knows me.

Venus. Yes; it was the touch of your kind mortal hand that has given me power to animate this marble shell!

Alph. (Aside.) She says she's a shell. I wonder what kind of shell—p'raps a whelk shell!

Venus. 'Twas you who placed the magic ring on my fingers, do I speak truly?

Alph. (Delighted.) Quite right, mum! (Aside.) I wish I knew her proper name. (Aloud.) I'm sure it's very kind of you to take all the trouble of walking here from those gardens to give it me. You shall go back in a hansom.

Venus. And you think it was just to give you back this pat'ry ring I came? Think you it was for only this have I visited the face of the earth, and followed you to your palace? You are too modest! What is thy name?

Alph. Latherum—Alphonzo Latherum, hairdresser—hair cutting three pence, shaving a penny!

Venus. Alphonzo, happiness is yours! You have awakened me from my trance. Cast away all thy fears. You put the ring on my finger. I accept your offering—I am thine, and you, my hero, are mine!

Alph. You're making a big mistake. I did not mean anything when I put that ring on your finger. The fact is I was a little boozed.

Venus. Boozed! Is he a god?

Alph. Not quite; though sometimes it is a spirit.

Venus. Come, Alphonzo—come, join me in my

aerial flight to the regions far beyond these lowly worlds!

Alph. You'll excuse—I can't, I've made other arrangements. I am already engaged! I've got a girl!

Venus. I remember a bright-eyed mortal in the gardens. Is she your love?

Alph. Yes.

Venus. She must die! I myself will crush her!

Alph. (Aside.) I must drop Jane a postcard. *(Aloud.)* What do you want to crush her for?

Venus. Because she is in my path! And shall any mortal maid stand between you and I?

Alph. But we are to be married shortly.

Venus. Do as you will, I will ever be between you.

Alph. Eh, that's a bit thick for me! *(Aside.)* I must kick her a bit. *(Aloud.)* You see, there are a few little things you ain't aware of. There is a great difference between you and I—ain't the same—and I'm a respectable hairdresser; and what would people say if they saw me talking to a goddess with only her nightdress on?

Venus. You speak empty words. I know not what you mean. But this little I can glean from your worldly talk, you wish to evade me. But no, it shall never be. Let this suffice you, that I am here to fulfil the troth you have plighted.

Alph. I don't think so! I really must decline your generous offer with thanks.

Venus. Have a care. Being so young and handsome as thou art I pity thee! Do nothing rash—pause ere you rouse the fearful ire of Venus!

Alph. If it's all the same to you I'd rather not.

Venus. I leave you, then. Use the time I give you well in thinking of my words, till I come again.

Alph. (Aside.) I'll move to-morrow!

Venus. For the present, farewell!

Alph. (Pleased.) Oh, she's going at last! *(Aloud.)* Shall I call a four wheeler?

(Opens door.)

Venus. Fool, I am not going to leave thy palace, I am going to take an aerial flight! I shall leave my statue with you here, while my inmost soul soars on high in Cyprus.

Alph. (Excited.) Oh, what shall I do? I sha'n't be able to move her. Look here, Mrs. Venus, I—

Venus. (Backing up stage to window.) No more words! Farewell for the present!

(Go g, and flash of lightning. Venus is again transfixed in same position as in Scene I.)

Alph. She's gone, and left her statue here behind her, and in exactly the same way as she was in those cursed gardens! Ah, a good thought! I might be able to get that ring. It can't hurt it if I broke its finger off with the poker—it's only stone! I'll try. *(He picks up poker, and just as he lifts it to strike Venus, flash of lightning and gong.—Business.—He drops poker.)* It's a frost! But I won't give in till I do get it! If I could only get that ring off it would be all right. Well, I'll just cover it over for the present. *(Puts haircutting cloth over it.)* No, a better idea. I'll put it behind this screen. *(He manages to carry Venus into cupboard and puts table before door.)* There, she can't get out of there in a hurry!

Enter HANDSAW, R. U. E.

Hand. This is the place. I think this fellow

might give me some clue as to the whereabouts of the missing statue. *(Enters shop and shouting.)* Shop!

Alph. (Frightened.) I'm not guilty.

Hand. Ah, did I frighten you? *(Aside.)* Ah, that looks suspicious! I'll get a clue here.

Alph. Hair cut or shave?

Hand. Neither. You are Latherum, the barber, arn't you? I want to talk to you.

Alph. Suppose we take a walk.

Hand. No; I'll say what I've got to here. always deal straightforward.

Alph. (Aside.) I wonder who he is?

Hand. (Hearing him.) I am Inspector Handsaw, of Scotland Yard; and I am not a man to be kept in the dark.

Alph. Let me light a candle.

Hand. You lost a ring in the gardens?

Alph. How did you know?

Hand. I was there. And, look here, if you'll help me, it will be a fine thing for you. I'll let you have a share of the reward.

Alph. What reward?

Hand. Ah, you're a smart fellow; you don't mean to give yourself away! When they first told me what you were, I didn't expect to find you what you are. But now I see you are what you are, I'm not at all surprised to know you are what you are.

Alph. No, of course not; I fully agree with you. But, for Heaven's sake, what are you talking about?

Hand. Why, about the stolen statue from the gardens.

Alph. (Aside.) I'm a corpse!

Hand. What I mean is this: I saw you by the figure just before it was stolen; and you had your eye on the two thieves at the same time I had my eye on 'em. Can't you give a guess where that figure is now?

Alph. Not at all—not at all!

Hand. I have an idea it's very near at hand.

(Goes toward screen.)

Alph. (Pulling him away.) Come away, the cupboard's been varnished.

Hand. The only thing I wish I could only put my hand on the thieves as easily as I put my hand on you. *(Business.—Puts his hand on Alphonzo.)*

Enter an OLD MAN, R. U. E. (super.). He enters shop.

Man. A shave, please.

(Sits in chair. Alphonzo don't know what he's doing, goes to shave old man with fender, &c., and any silly business, ad lib.)

Hand. Well, I'll see you again.

Alph. Not if I see you first.

Hand. (Whispering.) Help me to get a clue as to where the figure is, and I'll share the reward with you—that's fair enough. *(Going towards door.)* You understand?

Alph. (Aside.) Yes; I wish I didn't.

(Old Man rises, after being shaved. As he rises, a long knocking is heard at screen.—Lightning and gong.)

Man. Mercy, what was that?

Alph. I think we shall have rain. *(Aside, in great excitement.)* She's waking up! What am I to do?

Venus. (Inside.) Alphonzo, release me!

Alph. (Terrified, but still putting a bold face on)

the matter.) Good morning, sir; hope you had a nice shave. (*Pushes him headlong out of shop.—Business.*) Beg pardon, you nearly slipped! (*Handsaw goes to assist Old Man to rise, and Alphonzo bangs the door to and locks.*) Another two minutes like that and I'll get the fever. I wonder if they're gone? (*He looks through keyhole.*) Yes, they're going.

[*Old Man and Handsaw exit, R. U. E.*
I breathe again!

As he says this VENUS appears from behind screen.

It's no use. I can't get her out of the way.

Venus. How could you dare to imprison me in that narrow tomb? I thought I was buried beneath the soil. And had it been so I would have caused this city to be in one vast ruin—an earthquake.

Alph. (*Aside.*) I won't hurry her! Look here, if you're as fond of me as you say you are, you'd go back to your place in the gardens, where you've been stolen from. The police are looking everywhere for you.

Venus. He is good, this police. If I see him I'll reward him.

Alph. There's a good many "hims" in the police, and I tell you what it is, if you don't give up that ring I'll have you locked up, by George I will!

Venus. I know no George, nor will it profit you to call on him. I will go forth into the world and see the people of this city—and you must take me!

Alph. Not much.

Venus. I will follow you everywhere, and should anyone ask who and what I am, you must say I am now betrothed to Venus. Then among the mortals you will be blameless.

Alph. Blameless? What would Jane say?

Venus. Ah, you have revealed your love's name! I have but to ask in your streets, where does Jane, the lover of Alphonzo, live, lead me there; and, having arrived at her dwelling, she shall die!

Alph. But, look here, there's thousands of Janes in London.

Venus. That being the case I shall kill them all!

Alph. Why?

Venus. Because, dissipated youth, you love them all!

Alph. (*Aside.*) If she could only see me shaving people, p'raps she'd become disgusted, and leave me! I'll try it! (*Aloud.*) If you only saw me at my trade, a barbering, you'd see what a mistake you were making.

Venus. I will see you at your toil. Barb at once.

Alph. Wait till I get a customer. I do my business in this shop.

Venus. Then, I will wait and watch you.

Alph. Do you want to ruin my trade?

Venus. I will make no sign or movement; but I will see you at your daily toil. I have said it! Obey me!

Alph. (*Aside.*) All right! I'll put her in a corner. No one would think but she is one of my fixtures.

Venus. Place me where I may behold thee at thy toil.

Alph. All right! Get up in this corner, and I'll just pop this haircutting cloth over you. (*He does so.*) If she can once get it into her marble head I'm a barber and keep a shop, I think she will turn up her nose at me, and then she'll give me back that ring.

Enter AUGUSTUS, R. U. E. Enters shop.

Aug. Good morning, old fellow! I feel a little chippie this morning. (*Sits in chair.*) I wish I didn't drink so much, don't you know! Last night I had a fearful time after going to the Alhambra. (*Alphonzo begins lathering him.*) They've got a beautiful ballet there now. There's a charming little girl there, who plays one of Venus's doves. I was mashed on her in a minute, and I pride myself I mashed her too—she's dead gone!

Venus. Traitor!

(*Business.—Alphonzo so frightened, he pushes brush in Augustus's mouth. Augustus is also very frightened.*)

Aug. I could swear I saw that statue move! Look it's shaking its fists at me!

Venus. (*Snaking her fists at Augustus.*) Villain! (*Alphonzo much alarmed.*)

Aug. There it is again! Oh, I've got 'em bad again!

Alph. Yes; you've got the jim-jams. What, sir—I've cut your chin off? Never mind, sir, don't charge any extra.

Aug. Your kindness only exceeds your beauty! You've done it on purpose, because I cut you out with Jane.

Venus. (*To herself, loud enough for Alphonzo to hear.*) Ah, he knows where she dwells! I will at once ask him!

Alph. Oh, she'll ruin me! Good morning, sir! Here's your hat, sir. (*Business.—In his hurry to get Augustus out he gives him a basin for his hat; he puts it on; flour falls over him.—Business.*)

Aug. What the devil—

Alph. Yes; I think we shall have snow! Good morning, sir.

(*Business.—Bowing him to door, and pushes him outside shop.*)

Aug. Awfully rude, don't you know!

[*Goes off, R. U. E.*

Alph. She's ruining my trade! Ah, I see it all! She's got wild—she's disgusted at my shaving people! Hooray!

Venus. Where is that wretched mortal who dared to slay my dove? Bring him forth! Where is he who dares to slay the only thing on earth I love since all are taken from me? Ah, where is Vulcan?

Alph. I don't know! Have you tried the pub opposite!

Venus. Your words are empty. Where are my children—Cupid, Æneas? Where is Mars?

Alph. I'll have a look in the time table. I fancy it's by Greenwich.

Venus. Ah, where is the Cyprian youth Adonis, who was so famed for his beauty? Where is he? Speak! Where is he?

Alph. (*Annoyed.*) How the devil do I know?

Venus. Ah, I remember! The beautiful youth, alas—alas!

Alph. (*Aside.*) The beautiful youth, alas! She's off her nut!

Venus. Was he not gored to death by a wild boar?

Alph. How do I know? He might have been run over by a steam-roller for all I know!

Venus. Knew you my husband?

Alph. No, I wish I did; I'd send him a wire.

Venus. I am the wife of Vulcan, who was the son of Jupiter and Juno.

Alph. How Juno?

Venus. He was a god of fire, and presided over the workers of metal. His workshop was under Mount Etna, where, assisted by the Cyclops, he forged thunderbolts for Jove.

Alph. (Admiringly.) Quite a little *Weekly Budget*, ain't she!

Venus. Now I have told you who I am. I must have slept now some thousands and thousands of years.

Alph. Had a tidy doss then?

Venus. But thou hast awakened me, and I am thine for ever.

Alph. (Aside.) I'll take the first train for America to-morrow.

Venus. But, where is that fearful youth who slew my doves? Bring him forth!

Alph. I can't bring him fourth or fifth. He was not talking about a dove; he was talking about a ballet girl. And now, missus, to come to the point, now you've seen me doing my daily business you've thought better of it, ain't you?

Venus. Better; aye, far better! They sit at your bidding, and you make them sit in silence while you bend over their faces with yond r sharp little instrument, and you threaten their bare throats! You are indeed a king of mortals, and I love you even more! I would do anything for thee!

Alph. Well, first of all give me the ring.

Venus. The sole symbol of my power—the charm that has called me from my long sleep? Never.

Alph. Well, I shall place the matter in the hands of a lawyer. *(Aside.)* If I could only get her to stay here a bit, I'd go and find that inspector fellow and tell him all about it. *(Aloud.)* Just stay here a minute. I'll go and get you two pen'oth of eels. You must feel hungry. *(He suddenly gets out by door, and when he is outside, he locks it.)* Now, my lady, you're safe for a little bit. I'll just see if I can find that inspector.

Just as he is going, enter JANE, R. U. E.

Oh, it's all over!

Jane. You don't seem pleased to see me?

Alph. Oh, yes, I am, dear! I never felt so pleased in all my life!

Jane. Well, you're a nice one! Why don't you ask me in?

Alph. The fact is, I've got the brokers in.

Jane. It's false! I can see it in your face. You are deceiving me! You've got someone in there you don't want me to see! But I will go in.

Alph. No, don't—you'll be crushed.

Jane. Alphonzo, much as I love you, I will leave you for ever unless you let me see who is in your shop!

Venus. (Who is trying to get out by door.) Alphonzo, release me at once!

Alph. Oh!

Jane. Oh, you deceitful wretch, a woman's voice! I knew it! I'll take poison!

Alph. And rob the poor beetles?

(Venus, seeing she can't get out by door, quietly walks through vampire at back, and faces Alphonzo and Jane.)

Venus. Ah, then this is your love?

Jane. (Screaming.) Oh, a ghost!

(Falls on her knees.)

Venus. Away, maiden—he loves you not; he is mine—lest I crush thee!

Alph. (To Jane.) Here, get inside! *(Opens door, and Jane runs in shop and gets behind screen.)* Now, look here, missus, I won't have any more of this. Hallo, give me that razor!

Venus. Never! With this I will sweep my rival from my path! *(Suddenly enters shop.)* Where is she, I say? Ah, look! I've cut my hand! I bleed!

Alph. Ah, you've cut the finger with my ring on! *(Tries to get it off.)* Let me hold it!

Venus. Never! You would seek flight! I will keep this! Oh, the loss of this blood is freezing me! I am going, Alphonzo! Ah!

(Gong.—Lightning. She is again transfixed.)

Alph. There, right in the middle of my shop again! Oh, if I could only get that ring! But I'm forgetting all about poor Jane! I'll go and tell her all about it! *(Goes through door in shop, L.)* Now, don't give way like that, Jane! It will all come right in the end, and I—Hallo! What are they doing? Keep still, dear! Come behind this screen. Here's those same men coming into my shop I saw at the gardens. They were after this self-same figure. Oh, if they'd only pinch it—if they'd only sneak it!

Enter the TWO ROBBERS in street, R., looking very cautiously about.—Music till end of scene.

Alph. (Looking over screen.) Ah, here they come! I'll not disturb 'em.

First R. All's safe! The shaver's out, and we've got it all to ourselves.

Second R. Who'd have thought the barber bloke would have had the nous about him to cop hold of this statue?

First R. Won't he look sick when he discovers it gone?

Alph. (Aside.) Yes, won't I?

Enter HANDSAW in street, R. Looks in through crack in door.

First R. It's a good job he left the door open! Who'd have thought he was smart enough to cop hold of that statue! Here it is, Jim! Now for it!

Hand. Like a sleuth hound I've tracked 'em, and th's barber after all is one of 'em. He'll be transported!

Jane and Alph. (Overhearing.) Oh?

First R. Hallo! Here's marks of blood on her hands, and here's a ring. It's loose! I'll pull it off! There it is, Jim! We'll pawn it!

Alph. It's off! Hooray!

(Business.—First Robber holding up long cloak to cover Venus. When he holds up cloak, it entirely hides her from view. Music, forte.)

Hand. Now's my time! *(Enters.—Aside.)* Now I've got you!

First R. Now we've got you!

(Lightning.—Gong.—Cloak falls, Venus has disappeared—she goes through vampire at back. Alphonzo falls over screen, Robbers and Handsaw look on in wonder. Jane fainting. Tableau. Close in. Flats in first groove.)

SCENE II.—*Front Scene.—Clouds.**Enter HANDSAW, R.*

Hand. Well, I can hardly believe my senses! There was the statue before my very eyes; there were the thieves in the very act of stealing the antique marble before my eyes; there was everything before my eyes, and, blow me, if it didn't disappear before my eyes. It's the most mysterious affair I ever came across. I—who have been in the Criminal Investigation Department for over thirty years, and reckoned the finest man for having innocent men and women hanged and transported—done. I've been had by some illusion? What shall I do? Shall I resign my position in the force, and go back to tripe dressing? No—no! I'll have a case ere to-morrow or my name is not Handsaw. Ah, what is that I see? A little boy eating bread and dripping in the open street, before the gaze of the passers-by? Oh, this must be seen into! I should lose all respect for myself as a member of the force if I didn't look some poor little innocent little child up for doing nothing. It's a way we've got in the force. Now, then, my bold and massive wretch of three years old, I'm down on you like two ton of bricks!

*[Exit.]**Enter TWO ROBBERS, R.*

First R. What do you think of it, Bill—it vanished?

Second R. Wonderful! Never see anything like it since our tom cat had chickens.

First R. Go on, your tom cat have chickens! What do you take me for? Your tom cat have chickens!

Second R. I'll bet you I'm right. Our tom cat had chickens!

First R. When?

Second R. Why, one night out in the yard! The fowl-house was left open, our tom cat rushed in and sneaked a couple of chickens—so didn't he have chickens?

First R. Go on, you fathead. I could have told you that.

Second R. Well, why didn't you? Here, I sha'n't go in for sneaking statues again. I believe they are all pretty well alive. Didn't you ever hear of *Peg million and Gill o' beer*?—him as makes a figure, and it comes to life? Do you know, I think I was made for something better than hard work?

First R. You work? Why, you never robbed an honest man of a hard day's work in your blooming natural! Look here, I'm going to chuck statues—I'm going in for di'mons!

Second R. Well, I'll trump it!

First R. No; you don't understand me. Suppose now I were to go into a di'mond merchant's and asked him to show me some of his most valuable di'monds, what would be the first thing he would show me?

Second R. The door.

First R. No; you don't understand me.

Second R. But the bloke would.

First R. Look here! I'll put it in another way. Suppose I was to go into the Bank of England for five thousand quid, what would I come out with?

Second R. A copper.

First R. Oh, you don't catch my meaning!

Second R. No; and you don't catch their money!

First R. Bah, you're next to a fool!

Second R. Yes, I'm not far off you!

First R. Come on, let's see if we can do anything to make up for the blooming mess we've made over this statue business—what shall we say to the bloke that paid us to sneak this marble Venus?

Second R. Why, give him a bit of bogie—tell him we got the statue in a shed, get the money off him, tell him we'll go and fetch the figure, and—do a guy.

First R. Good on you! Your head's some good I see.

Second R. Come along; we've got no time to lose.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*Same as Scene I, Act I.—Lights half down, lime on. ALPHONZO on ground, in the same position as he fell in the former scene.*

VENUS speaks, through music—"Is this a dream?"

Venus. (Speaking to Alphonzo.) Ah, yours has been a troubled sleep, but now it's almost done!

Your seeming worry here to-night I'm sure has caused much fun.

Our humble aim has been to show to-night,

That happiness can only spring from right.

You young spark, though barbering your grade is,

Fancy you're Adonis when among the ladies.

Let this dream be a lesson—although in jest—

Be true to the one who loves you best.

Farewell, young spark, awake from seeming pain, If this dream's a lesson taught, you have not dreamt in vain!

Awake—Awake—Awake!

(Gong.—Flash.—Limelight off.)

Enter JANE and AUGUSTUS from Pavilion.

Jane. Oh, where is Alphonzo? Perhaps he's killed himself through my treating him so unkindly.

Aug. But, my dear young lady—

Jane. Don't "dear young lady me"! It's all through you. (Trying to find Alphonzo.) I wonder where he is? I left him here. Ah, here he is! (Sees him.) Ah, he is asleep! Wake up, Alphonzo! You'll catch a cold. Wake up. (Shakes him.)

Alph. (Waking up.) A horse—a horse! A kingdom for a horse!

Aug. (Calling.) Four-wheeler!

Alph. (Seizing him.) Liar and slave, I've set my life upon the cast, and have sworn the hazard of the die! Six statues have I seen to-day—alive—alive—alive, oh! (Throws Augustus down.)

Jane. Whatever is the matter, Alphonzo? You must be dreaming!

Alph. (Recovering himself.) Eh! Dreaming? (Looks at the figure; looks for ring. Finds it on ground.) Dreaming?—that's it! I've dreamt it! Oh, I've had such a fearful dream—worse than the jim-jams—but it's all right now! Here's the ring I bought, which I thought I'd lost. (Puts it on Jane's finger.) Now, will I be your wife? I mean will you be my wife?

Jane. (Shyly.) I don't know.

Alph. Have me a week on trial! No, I don't mean that. You know what I mean. Will you—eh, one, two, three? (They embrace.)

Aug. But what about me?

Alph. Oh, you go to the devil!

Aug. Awfully rude, old chappie!

Alph. Well, let's get back to town.

Jane. Well, wish your friends in front good night.

Alph. Good-night, ladies; good-night, gentlemen. You have been and seen my dream—I know

you have, 'cause I heard you laughing! I thought I was going to be imprisoned.

Jane. So you are! Ain't you asked me to marry you?

Alph. Oh, yes; then we're both going to do time—we are going to be transported for life.

(*Embrace.—Music, forte.*)

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